

An Approach To The Operation Of The Arbatel Of Magic (1.1)

<http://www.boudicca.de/arbat-e.htm>
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Background

The "Arbatel of Magic" appeared at Basle, Switzerland in 1575 in Latin and is one of the lesser known works of the 'grimoire' tradition. Waite writes that it has the quality of true transcendental literature, being free from 'dangerous instruction which makes for open Black Magic.' While it may be going a little to far to praise it as having transcendental quality, it can be considered more aligned with 'white magic' (whatever that may be) than most other books of the grimoire tradition.

It is unfortunate that only one part of the book has survived or was ever written, being called the Isagoge, or Fundamental Instructions. The work promised a further eight volumes, concerning themselves with "Microcosmical Magic", "Olympic Magic", "Hesiodiacal and Homerial Magic", "Sibylline Magic", "Pythagorical Magic", "The Magic of Appolonius", "Hermetical Magic" and "Prophetical Magic". It would seem that "Arbatel" is the name of an angel or spirit, although a preliminary search turns up no such angel as 'Arbatel' in the more popular works of occult lore.

The Isagoge contains seven groups of seven aphorisms, most of these consist of an eclectic mixture of mainly Christian and Judaic lore, with influences from Pythagoras and other esoteric philosophers. Examples of the information presented include spiritual hierarchies, the properties of certain numbers, prayers and various other spiritual secrets. We shall be mainly concerned with the third septenary, which discusses the so-called 'Olympic Spirits' and the method of calling upon them.

The Olympic Spirits are the spirits which, under God, preside over the natural world. There are seven chief spirits, each corresponding to a planet (or planetary sphere), and having under them a certain number of provinces being 196 in number (although the book wrongly states 186). The Olympic spirits, their sigils and planetary associations are thus:

- Aratron = Saturn
- Bethor = Jupiter
- Phaleg = Mars
- Och = Sun
- Haggith = Venus
- Ophiel = Mercury
- Phul = Moon

Like the Secundadeians of Trimethius, the Olympic spirits have planetary rule over a certain number of years. The Olympic spirits rule for 490 years each. According to the book, Bethor ruled from 60bc to 430ad, Phaleg ruled until 920ad, then Och until 1410, Haggith ruled until 1900. Therefore, the current ruler is Ophiel.

John Dee is known to have owned, although possibly not used, the Arbatel. He makes several references to it and especially the spirit Och in his diaries of mystical exercises conducted with Edward Kelly. Along with the "Sworn Book of Honorius" and the mysterious "Soyga" ("The Book Soyga or Aldaraia") the Arbatel may have played some part in forming Dee's "Enochian" system.

The names of the Olympic spirits are not unique to the Arbatel, but can be found in other magical manuscripts, although with many different modes of rulership associations and sigils. For instance, the so-called "Sworn Book of Honorius" mentions Araton (sic) as one of the angels of the first month. Also, Dr Rudd, in his "Treatise on Angel Magic" regards the Olympic spirits as being only slightly less in power than the nine hierarchies of angels.

Practice

As with so many other medieval grimoires, the actual instructions for the calling of the 'Olympic spirits' are rather confused and at times contradictory - probably due to years of (mis)translation and copying. My approach to the Arbatel is quite simple, yet seemingly quite effective.

Firstly the appropriate spirit must be chosen. The powers of the spirits are as follows:

Aratron is the spirit of Saturn. He can apparently turn anything into stone, turn treasure into coal and coal into treasure, give powerful familiars, teach alchemy and magic, reconciles the spirits of the Earth, make one invisible, make the barren fruitful and prolong life.

Bethor is the spirit of Jupiter. He can make one important, find treasure, reconcile the spirits of Air which can transport precious stones and make medicine work miraculously, he also gives familiars of the firmament.

Phaleg is the spirit of Mars, which is described as The Prince of Peace. He is attributed to giving honour in affairs of war.

Och is the spirit of the Sun. He can give 600 years of perfect health, bestow wisdom, give excellent familiars, teach medicine, turn things into gold and make a purse "spring with gold".

Hagith is the spirit of Venus. He makes people fair and beautiful, turns copper into gold and gold into copper, and also gives familiar spirits.

Ophiel is the spirit of Mercury. He gives familiar spirits, teaches all arts and enables the conversion of Quicksilver into the Philosopher's Stone.

Phul is the spirit of the Moon. He gives familiars of the water and makes men live for 300 years.

The above claims of the spirits powers may seem a little far fetched to many, but the book of the Arbatel states that the miracles which the spirits are able to bestow will only happen if the magician believes that they can - if he has faith in "God" and the "spirits". Some may like to see the powers of the spirits as metaphorical.

The next step is to write the spirit's sigil and the prayers on to new paper. The first prayer is to summon the spirit and is thus:

"Omnipotent and eternal God, who hast ordained the whole creation for thy praise and thy glory, as also for the salvation of man, I beseech Thee to send Thy Spirit (name), of the (order - solar etc.) order, that he may instruct me concerning those things about which I design to ask him. Nevertheless, not my will be done, but thine, through Jesus Christ, thy only begotten Son, Who is our Lord. Amen."

The second prayer is to send the spirit away and is:

"Forasmuch as thou camest in peace and quietly, having also answered unto my petitions, I give thanks unto God, in Whose Name thou camest. Now thou mayst depart in peace unto thy orders; but return unto me again, when I shall call thee by thy name, or by thy order, or by thy office, which is granted from the Creator. Amen."

You should wait until the day and planetary hour of the spirit which you seek to call. The book suggests that the best time for this is at sunrise, but in my opinion any matching planetary hour should work well. After banishing and

opening (using rituals such as the LBRP and Middle Pillar), the first prayer is read aloud. I usually try to face a window and watch for any signs that the spirit may have manifested, such as an animal appearing or a sudden sound. The reading of the first prayer may be used as the opening to meditation on one of the spirit's powers, for example teaching alchemy. Through this meditation one may come into contact with the spirit and even be able to enter into conversation. However, the Arbatel warns that you should not keep the spirit more than one hour or it may become 'familiarily addicted to thee'.

Once the working has finished and the charge delivered, then the second prayer is read in order to discharge the spirit. The paper with the sigil and prayers on may then be stored in a safe place, or carried about your person as a talisman. That is all the rite consists of. It is very simple, yet effective - I have found the powers of the Olympic Spirits to be most potent and useful.